



**U.S. Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Texas**

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 14, 2004

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**EL PASO MAN SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON IN TWO SEPARATE CASES**

**U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that a federal judge in El Paso sentenced 34-year-old Steven Earl Cottingham of El Paso to a total of 94 months in federal prison.

In his ruling, United States District Judge David Briones sentenced Cottingham to 70 months imprisonment for Mailing a Threatening Communication and Threatening to Use a Weapon of Mass Destruction. In addition, Judge Briones sentenced Cottingham to 24 months imprisonment, to run consecutive to the 70-month sentence, for Conspiracy to Commit Bank Fraud. On September 24, 2004, Cottingham pled guilty to the charges.

"Mr. Cottingham earned this sentence by threatening innocent people with terror. Today, he pays the price," stated **U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton**.

In the first case, by pleading guilty, Cottingham admitted that on August 28, 2003, he placed in the U.S. mail an envelope that read "POSTMAN DIE" which contained a white powdery substance and a letter that read "NINE ELEVEN ALL OVER AGAIN." Cottingham also admitted that on August 30, 2003, he deposited into the U.S. mail an envelope with the words "E.L.F." (Earth Liberation Front) and "FOR THE EL PASO FBI". This letter also had a white powdery substance and contained threatening language indicating that the next letter might contain Anthrax. This letter also named a number of public institutions that might receive the next letter. On September 10, 2003, two separate letters were found at El Paso businesses containing the same threatening language as the two previous letters. Cottingham also admitted that he sent these letters to the businesses.

In the second case, Cottingham admitted that he created counterfeit checks drawn on the account of the Islamic Center of El Paso. Specifically, he created the following counterfeit checks:

- July 7, 2003, in the amount of \$6,000 made payable to his wife
- July 8, 2003, in the amount of \$4,500 made payable to his wife
- July 9, 2003, in the amount of \$5,000 made payable to his wife
- July 10, 2003, in the amount of \$8,000 made payable to his wife
- July 12, 2003, in the amount of \$17, 591.62 made payable to his wife

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and The U.S. Postal Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorneys Greg McDonald and Steve Garcia prosecuted these cases on behalf of the Government.

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